

# GCMTA NEWS



## From the President

Decades ago, when I was a young high school student, I decided to be a piano performance major in college because I liked to play. It was not because I wanted to perform for a living. I knew that I would starve to death if I were to rely on that. Also, I did not have the slightest inclination to teach piano. As a matter of fact, I never, ever wanted to teach piano. I had neither the will nor the patience.

So, I went to law school. I could rationalize it. Music is very detail oriented and so is the law. When I told people that I was a music major and going to law school, they looked at me like I had two heads. I should have heeded their perplexing looks. After 25 years of practicing law and actually feeling physically sick thinking of going into the office, I quit.

One day, I was playing the piano, and my neighbor knocked on the door. He asked if I would be willing to teach his first grade daughter. I told him that I had never taught before but would be willing to give it a go.

Fast forward about 12 years, and I have 20 students and am absolutely loving it! God has a way of putting you where you need to be at the time that you need to be there and giving you what you need, in my case the will and patience. I'm late to the party, but I'm so glad that I made it!

Have a happy teaching year!

Kimber Kwiatkowski

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## DIGITAL RESOURCES

We will be running another upgrade of our website form software during August, and will be adding new forms. Please contact Kathy Dawal if something is not working on the website, if you have a suggestion for a resource link, or need a form for your event.

## NFMC NEWS

We won!! YAY!! Gwinnett County won awards in five different NFMC events this past year!! Bravo to all of you who participated and supported GCMTA's efforts. It means additional hundreds of dollars into our bank account. We are looking for performers for our meetings which will enable us to enter again for next year. Would anyone like the challenge to present a MacDowell, Beach, Barber, Bonds, Griffes, Copland, Gershwin, or ??? piece they'd like to share? We need American composers that we didn't do last year. 🇺🇸 Contact Deb Hughes - [bndhughes@comcast.net](mailto:bndhughes@comcast.net) or 770-401-1978.

## MEMBERSHIP

Dear GCMTA Members, please invite music teachers to our meetings. We think once they see what wonderful things we do and what wonderful friends we are and what wonderful events we hold and what wonderful perks there are...(you get the idea)...they will want to join us. But they just won't understand unless they see and hear for themselves, so bring them!

Don't forget to pay your dues and join MTNA, GMTA, and GCMTA. We've got a wonderful year in store. Our first meeting is September 24<sup>th</sup>. See you then, and we can have some...

### Gwinnett County Cake

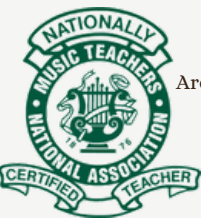
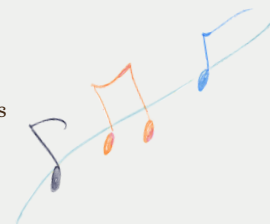
by Debra Hughes, NCTM



Preheat the oven of music  
With plenty of smiles and laughs  
Stir in some sweet friendship  
That makes the time feel half

Bake with careful planning  
And preparation to share  
Decorate the meetings with info  
And tips that show you care

Enjoy all that our cake offers  
Perks of being a member  
Of a great organization of teachers  
At our gathering in September



Are you Nationally Certified? Let this be the Year! Click here for more information:  
<http://www.mtnacertification.org>

## CENTRAL FEDERATED FESTIVAL

**When:** March 7, 2026

**Where:** Lawrenceville First Baptist Church, 165 South Clayton St., Lawrenceville

**Event Chairs:** Kathy Dawal, Lisa Ogg

**Virtual Event:** This option will still be available.

We are looking forward to holding our Festival in a new/old location. Some of our teachers will remember having the Federated Festival here in previous years. We have enjoyed our years at Hebron, but their focus has changed to more church-related events. Watch out newsletters for details in the coming months.

We will still be having a Virtual event, but have not yet finalized the details.



## OUR MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE: YOU!

In an all-volunteer organization like GCMTA, nothing happens without volunteers. We all have benefitted from the teachers in our group who for many years have sacrificed personal and family time to coordinate the smooth running of our events.

Chairing an event can be quite a big job. For the past few years we have been looking for ways to allow more teacher involvement in taking care of small but necessary tasks. If you have a skill or a few hours and a willing spirit, please contact your event chair to see what you can do to help out.

We love to see students taking advantage of the Festivals and Auditions that our chapter provides. And, we greatly appreciate our members who generously give of their time and skills in event organization.

## JR./SR. SCHOLARSHIP

Jr./Sr. Scholarship is set for Saturday morning, April 18, 2026, at PianoWorks. Registration is online, and the firm deadline is March 13, 2026; please see the website at

<https://gcmta.org/home/index/student-activities/juniorsenior-scholarship> for the information and repertoire requirements. This is a reminder that students must participate in at least one other GCMTA-sponsored event during the school year to be eligible.

If you have questions, please contact Cathy Thacker, NCTM, Chair, at <mailto:csbt88@gmail.com>.

## 2026 LOCAL AUDITION

Audition Chair: Sun Hee Kim

Sun Hee's email: [sunheekim.piano@gmail.com](mailto:sunheekim.piano@gmail.com)

Sun Hee's phone: 404-655-2993

Audition Date: February 14, 2026

Location: PianoWorks

Address: 2805 Buford Hwy, Duluth, GA 30096

Registration Deadline: January 14, 2026

## 2025-2026 MEETINGS

We have an exciting program of meeting presentations lined up for this year. This past winter was a hard one for our pianos. Texas Galan starts out our year showing us how to keep our pianos healthy and performing well.

We follow it up in October with Dr. Martha Thomas sharing lessons she's learned in her 50+ years of teaching and performing. In November, Dr. Kevin Chance will demonstrate practical teaching techniques in teaching artistry and musicality from the start.

Our January luncheon is your time to shine. Do you have teaching pieces apart from the standard methods and repertoire that motivate your students, add zest to your recitals, or work for that one student who doesn't like anything? We look forward to your sharing it with us.

In February we have been invited to join the North Dekalb chapter for a presentation on teaching piano music with dance elements by Dr. Yoshiko Arahata. Our regular February meeting will include a member recital. If you have a piece you would like to share with us, start practicing!

We round off the year with our Master Class in February, conducted by Dr. Patricia Dinkins-Matthews, and our May luncheon and Teacher of the Year presentation.

Please watch our website and future newsletters for more details. See you in September!



## GMTA THEORY EXAMS

### GMTA THEORY TEST

**THE ONLY OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENTS TO TAKE THE GMTA THEORY TEST IS AT THE GCMTA MUSIC DAY EVENT.**

**Date:** November 15, 2025

**Exam Fee:** \$15 per student

**Location:** Duluth First Baptist Church, Duluth, GA

**Application Deadline (Online Only):** October 1, 2025

Music Day Chairman: Kathy Dawal, 404-583-9769,  
kdawal81@gmail.com

Test Administrator: Rie Hosoi, 678-596-0401,  
riehosoi@yahoo.com

### APPLICATION INFORMATION:

\*Registration for the **GMTA Theory Test** is only available **online** at GMTA's website: <http://georgiamta.org/>

\*Students may take the same test or the next level. Sample tests can be found on the GMTA website.

### Georgia Auditions Theory Examination: GATE

**THE ONLY OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENTS TO TAKE THE GATE IS AT LOCAL AUDITIONS.**

**Date:** February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026

**Exam Fee:** \$15 per student

**Location:** PianoWorks, Duluth, GA

**Registration Deadline (Online Only):** January 15, 2026

Auditions Chairman: Sun Hee Kim, 404-655-2993,  
sunheekimpiano@gmail.com

Exam Administrator: Rie Hosoi, 678-596-0401,  
riehosoi@yahoo.com

### General Information

Each pre-college piano or piano concerto participant in GMTA's local, regional, and state auditions is **required to take and pass** one of the four (4) theory exams ("GATES") in order to advance beyond local auditions. Students may become EXEMPT from taking some or all of the GATES. For exemption information, practice exams, and other important information regarding the GATE visit the GMTA website at: <http://georgiamta.org/>

### APPLICATION INFORMATION

Registration for the **GMTA Theory Test** is only available **ONLINE** at the GMTA website: <http://georgiamta.org/>.

## MUSIC DAY

Music Day is a fantastic way to get students excited about learning and playing music! They'll only need to perform two songs from two different music periods. Each participant will receive a certificate, and some lucky ones will also receive a cash prize.

We're offering both in-person and virtual performance options to encourage everyone to participate.

Registration opens: September 1, 2025

Registration Deadline: Submitted online by Sunday, October 17, 2025

All fees are paid by Zelle or check postmark deadline: Friday, October 22, 2025

If a check is mailed, send it to: Nancy Morris, 3125 Dogwood Creek Pkwy, Duluth, 30096

In-person Performance Date: Saturday, November 15, 2025

Zelle to: contact Kathy Dawal or Nancy Morris to set up Zelle payment

Virtual Event:

Virtual Performance Submission Deadline: Tuesday, November 11, 2025

Primary events are piano (solo and ensemble), voice (Art Song and Musical Theater), and the GMTA Theory exams (not GATE).

Registration for all performance events will be via a link on our GCMTA website.

Registration for the GMTA theory exams is done via the Georgia MTA website.

Teacher work requirements: All teachers entering students in Music Day are required to work the event on the following bases:

7 or fewer students: work ½ day, assist with setting up or clean up.

8-14 students: work a full day, assist with clean up.

15 or more students: work a full day and assist in an administrative role. (e.g., lunch, hospitality, literature check)

Teacher work requirements are mandatory regardless of student cancellations. We encourage every teacher to participate in Music Day, however, a teacher may pay an exemption fee of \$50 for ½ day, \$100 for a full day, or a teacher may send an adult substitute.

## TEACHER OF THE YEAR NOMINATIONS

Nominations for our 2026 Teacher of the Year are due by December 31, 2025. Use this simple form and then ask colleagues and a parent of a student (past or present) for recommendations. <https://gmmta.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/TeacherOfYearNomination.pdf>

Send forms and any questions to [gloriapark4@gmail.com](mailto:gloriapark4@gmail.com)





## TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to our 2025 Teacher of the Year, Debra Hughes, NCTM! Debra has served GCMTA in many roles, including Advisor from 2015-2017, President from 2013-2015, President-Elect from 2011-2013, Auditions Chair, Jr./Sr. Chair, Performance Day Chair, and currently the Membership Chair. Deb's voice, flute, and piano students always perform very well at the many events that they enter. She has frequent winners at Music Day and West Federated Festival as well as some in Jr./Sr. Scholarship and Auditions.

She is a committed advocate for her students, encouraging them to participate in various events and compete for scholarships. Likewise, one sees her commitment to the general student population when she announces performance and competition opportunities at our GCMTA meetings and encourages us to enter our own students.

In addition to her involvement in GCMTA, Deb has held leadership positions in the Atlanta Music Club, Georgia Federation of Music Clubs, and in Georgia Music Teachers Association. She has also presented programs at our meetings and at GMTA State Conferences.

Deb's commitment to GCMTA is evident in her many efforts to enrich our organization. Deb initially suggested that GCMTA begin a Teacher of the Year Award. She also led the cause to start our MED/PED Scholarship for deserving high school seniors planning to major in music education or pedagogy. Currently, she is working diligently to submit GCMTA's name as a contender for an NFMCA cash award for preserving American music. In her position as Membership Chair, one which in recent history has been a rather minor role, Deb regularly keeps up with new members, asks us to promote MTNA membership to other colleagues, and rewards members who bring visitors to meetings.

A colleague highly recommended Deb for this honor: "Deb is one of the most creative teachers that I know. She uses amazing imagery for teaching new concepts to her students. I often consult with her on issues that come up with my own piano and flute students, and she always has an original take on how to communicate or how to address these issues."

A former student said, "If it wasn't for her [Mrs. Hughes'] encouragement and firm push, I wouldn't have realized the potential I had to be the student music therapist I am today, as I prepare to graduate from college in May. If it wasn't for her enthusiasm, I wouldn't have auditioned and sung with the Honors Performance Series at Carnegie Hall six times, and once at the Sydney Opera House." Another former student commented on the encouragement Deb gave him throughout his thirteen years of study with her.

A parent added this phrase: "Debra's musical talents are extraordinary, but what truly sets her apart is her ability to connect with her students and inspire them to achieve their fullest potential. Her kindness, patience, and sense of humor make learning enjoyable and effective, creating an environment where students feel both challenged and supported."

We appreciate Deb Hughes' involvement in GCMTA, and we congratulate her as our 2025 Teacher of the Year!



*2025 Teacher of the Year  
Debra Hughes*