

It is my pleasure to nominate the Raleigh Piano Teachers Association for consideration as MTNA's Local Association of the Year for 2023. RPTA is one of the most dynamic organizations of its kind that I have encountered in my professional life. At the first RPTA meeting I attended in 2000, a member sang the newly-revised rules for the Young Artist Auditions dressed as an Elvis impersonator, accompanied by another member rocking out on the piano. I knew then that I had stepped into a situation unlike anything I had ever experienced. The years since have demonstrated that RPTA is an organization whose members and leaders are determined to further their profession with creativity, flexibility, and a bit of fun.

The Covid-19 pandemic tested many organizations in ways they had never experienced before. Meredith College, the traditional home for RPTA's meetings and other activities, became unavailable for use. RPTA responded by doing meetings and events virtually, or finding creative ways to use venues for in-person activities. The afore-mentioned Young Artist Auditions attract 700-800 student participants each year, and require the assistance of around 90 teachers to run the event. In 2022, Meredith College was unavailable to host the event, so RPTA leaders got creative, and RPTA members stepped up. Around 15 private teachers offered to have students come to their studios in small groups throughout the day. These studios were scattered across the greater Raleigh area, requiring an immense amount of logistical planning. The event was carried out effectively and safely. The majority of students were able to play live for a judge, while provisions were still in place to allow for video submissions from students who preferred that option.

Members are enriched by the monthly meetings, featuring presentations by respected experts in the field. Every two years, RPTA offers a Pedagogy Clinic featuring a pedagogue of national repute. Recent clinicians have included well known pianists such as Brian Ganz, and Peter Mack, MTNA's current President-elect. Another biannual event is the Ensemble Festival, attracting hundreds to see students performing in various ensemble configurations ranging from piano duets, to four pianos sixteen hands. Musicales are offered multiple times per year, giving an outlet for students from different studios to perform in a formal recital setting. RPTA's most prestigious award for students is decided through its annual Scholarship Competition, with sponsorship from local businesses. Another piano dealership in the area funds an annual Teacher Merit Award of \$500.

In 2021, one of RPTA's members, Ruth Hafley, passed away at the age of 89. Her family gave RPTA a gift of \$25,000 to create an endowment that supports continued professional development for teachers. The RPTA Executive Board developed a plan to award two grants each year to RPTA members: one for \$1000 to a teacher pursuing a continuing education project; and the second for \$1500 for an RPTA member to attend the MTNA conference.

In preparing this essay, we polled members for their thoughts regarding RPTA. We received an outpouring of accolades from members who have belonged to the organization anywhere from 4 to 46 years. The following testimonial powerfully expresses the impact an organization like RPTA has on its members:

"I have been amazed by RPTA from day one of my membership in this supportive and dynamic community of teachers. I return to my studio after each program, workshop, or Coffee Connection inspired by new ideas and better equipped to guide my students in their music making. As a young professional, this has made all the difference in the quality of my teaching."

Thank you for your consideration.