

The Glissando

Sept. – Dec. 2022



Meet Danette Whelan, MEA President



Our newly elected president of the MEA, Danette Whelan, was recently interviewed by

Board members Bertha Mandel and Beverly Shea. In the interview, she shared these interesting facts about her background and musical career.

Danette joined the MEA years ago at the recommendation of her teacher Carmela Cecere. She enjoyed the MEA general meeting presentations, which widened her scope and her way of teaching. "I encourage my students to compose and improvise," she said. Danette became very interested in the Eric Steiner Original Composition Competition; the ESOC evaluations of her students' original compositions were comprehensive and rewarding, and helped her students "learn, grow and expand." In 2022, Danette served as chair of the Eric Steiner Original Composition Competition. A composer herself, Danette was invited by Nancy Modell to participate in the MEA's 90th Anniversary celebration in 2018 during which Danette performed four of her own compositions. In the past few years Danette has been deeply involved in the Composers' Corner. "It's very dear to me."

Danette began piano lessons at age 7 with the late MEA member Carmela Cecere. She encouraged Danette to play a solo recital at age 14 and at ages 16 and 18 to perform concertos with the Livingston Symphony. Carmela also jump-started the young Danette's teaching. "Under Carmela's tutelage, I competed in state competitions and frequently performed in winners' recitals at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. I performed many times during my school years and beyond, but with every performance I experienced extreme anxiety." Danette observed that when she would perform improvisations before an audience, she did not have that anxiety: improvisation was her element.

Exploring the reasons and the remedies for performance anxiety, Danette realized that she was not fully concentrating – not bringing her attention entirely to the music. She began to study meditation and mindfulness and learned to let go of negative thought patterns and replace them with positive thoughts. MNDFL and the Sri Amit Ray Meditation Center have certified Danette as an instructor in mindfulness and meditation respectively. Along with two other mindfulness piano instructors,

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September 15 General Meeting 53rd Annual Piano Competition: Character Pieces

Do you have any talented students who are looking for a chance to showcase their abilities? Well, look no further. MEA's Annual Piano Competition (APC) is the place for them. The 53rd APC syllabus features descriptive music by a wide variety of composers and includes solos, concertos, duets, and duos.

If you attend the general meeting on Thursday, Sept. 15 at 9:45 AM at the Madison Library (masks should be worn), or if you choose to Zoom in, you will hear live performances of the solo and duet repertoire for the 2023 APC. As always, this promises to be a wonderful way to start the musical year. The performers will be the talented and hardworking members of the APC committee: Ana Berschadsky, Vicky Griswold, Anna Katznelson, Kai Pangune Kim, Youn-hee Kim, Ruth Kotik, Michelle Kuo, Jongsun Lee, Beatrice Long, Naomi Takagi, and Yuka Yanagi.

The competition will take place on May 7 at the County College of Morris in Randolph.

To view the syllabus, click [here](#).

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Danette will present "From Heart to Hands: How Mindfulness can Revitalize Your Teaching" at the MEA general meeting on January 19, 2023.

To augment her earnings as a young piano teacher, Danette played and sang in jazz bands, and composed and arranged "contemporary music." Of her own music for students, Danette said, "My compositions are in a variety of styles and genres, and at a wide range of difficulty." She wrote classically influenced compositions such as the bestseller "The Teacher" (published in MEA's recent Notes From the Heart) and lots of easier pieces for piano students.



Outgoing President Yudit Terry hands over the gavel to Danette Whelan. Photo by Nancy Modell.

In her own teaching practice, Danette and her students study other composers' works to see how they are using chord progressions, modulations and transitions. Then when working on a transition with a student, for example, she might ask, "how would Debussy do this?" Many of her composing students use MuseScore, a free notation software, to write their music. Danette stated, "Music should be a personal experience. Inspiration can be found within you and in your environment." Sometimes she asks her students to look into nature - "birds or water, ambient sounds; listen for volume, timbre." Danette prefers to begin students no earlier than age 6 and can teach initially by rote how to improvise on the black keys and in A minor to which Danette may also improvise an accompaniment. She brings mindfulness into play.

What are her hopes for the MEA under her presidency? Danette replied, "First, I would like to say that Yudit did a fabulous job keeping the MEA functioning during these difficult years. The board worked hard too. We are not through with the pandemic, but learning from Yudit, I will keep the MEA thriving."

She added that she wants to explore social media in order to attract younger members to MEA; to set up an MEA Facebook account and using technology explore different avenues. After the first meeting in September, Danette would like to create a fall "meet and greet" or "fireside chat" to gather MEA members (actually or virtually) and get advice on a way to attract more musicians to come to our monthly general meetings. She wants to reach out to members at two or three different hours: morning, afternoon, or evening. Perhaps we could send out a short one-minute survey to answer the question, "What are you interested in?" Could we offer some type of incentive, such as the previous sale table of donated music or the "lotto" prize of new music once donated by the Plainfield Music Store?

Learn more about Danette [on her website](#).

Theory Registration Try it. You'll Like it!

Registration is open from October 1-21. The fee is only \$5 per test. Mail in forms can be found on the website under Forms/Downloads or interactive online forms can be found on your Member Homepage under Member Documents.

If you have never participated in the theory program before, the theory syllabus is posted on the website on your Member Homepage under Downloadable Documents on the right. It will give you a listing of the content of each of the 15 test levels.

Award incentives are available for students who pass 3 and 5 tests (ribbons) and 7, 10 and all 15 levels (monetary gift cards).

Teachers have the choice of receiving the tests and other materials either online or by snail mail and can administer the tests anytime at your convenience either in your studio or online. There is no time limit to complete the tests.

Please consider joining our Theory family of participating teachers. Any questions can be emailed to: theory@mea-nj.org. The next registration period will be in March 2023.

Marcia Maull, *Chair*