

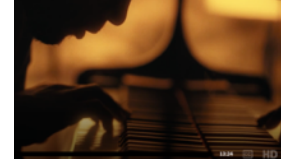
A few highlights this month:



SOLOMAN CHAPMAN "GIFTS OF GOSPEL MUSIC"



MUSICALE FEB 21 CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH



"A CONCERTO IS A CONVERSATION" SHORT FILM



# LYRICS

## Celebrating Denver's African American Musical Heritage

### Joseph F. Keel, Jennifer Ford Keel and JoFoKe

By Deborah De La Torre



"Joseph Keel briefly lived in Chicago where networking and his talent opened the door for him to bump shoulders with musical contemporaries and legends like Ella Fitzgerald, Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock and Calvin Keys."

Continued on page 7



Denver native, JoFoKe, grew up taking dance lessons at Eulipions Cultural Center in Five Points. She is now "...a highly sought-after and Grammy nominated music professional."

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**February Dates to Remember:**  
**February 10 (Page 4)**  
 9:30am - Membership Meeting  
 10:30am - Spring Program with Soloman Chapman  
**February 21 (Page 10)**  
 2pm - Virtual Musicales Celebrating Black History Month  
**February 24 (Page 3)**  
 9:30am - Board Members Monthly DEI Conversation

**2020/2021 Board Members:**

Vince Madison	President
Marilyn Madsen	Vice President (Programs)
Ben Raznick	Vice President (Newsletter)
Evelyn Billberg	Vice President (Membership)
Megan Koegel	Vice President (Student Musicales)
Deborah De La Torre	Vice President (Diversity Equity & Inclusion)
Nazila Nekoerad	Secretary
Allyson Koplen	Treasurer
Jan Spitzer	Social Chair
Kristin Jordheim	Parliamentarian

## Feb 2021 President's Message



Hello DAMTA:

It is an understatement to say we are living in turbulent times. I hope you are all surviving it well.

I just wanted to give a few words of encouragement and support for our profession.

When I see current events and hear public discourse, it seems to me that the love and pursuit of knowledge, truth and beauty is sorely lacking. And competence and skill are devalued in favor of arrogance and posturing.

As music teachers we are the antithesis of all that.

We teach our young students that:

- Hard work and perseverance lead to success.
- The expression of beauty is one of the most fulfilling and worthwhile of human endeavors.
- Acquiring knowledge and skill enables them to accomplish things they could not previously.
- The truth cannot be hidden (Did you practice this week?)
- Money is not the only thing with value.
- Self-expression is satisfying, but it takes time and dedication to develop the skills for your expressions to have a positive impact on others.

And many other life lessons too numerous to mention.

When a kid comes to you for lessons, it is an opportunity to help him/her become a more thoughtful, intelligent, and competent person.

And our adult students come to us hoping to expand their experience in the arts to enrich their lives and understanding. A noble and worthwhile goal that deserves our full support.

It is an important job. But we are up to it!

Have a great month and I hope to see you all (at least virtually) soon!

Vince Madison  
DAMTA President



## Board Members Initiate Monthly DEI Conversation

We had seven Board Members participate in our first-ever DEI Conversation, hosted by DAMTA's DEI Committee. We hope that these important discussions will provide an intimate setting for sharing, learning, reflecting, and more.

Our VP of DEI, Deborah De La Torre, highlighted five components that we are reflecting on in our discussions:

**Education** – the work requires that we continue to gain knowledge

**Ownership** – this work is for everyone, not just the “leader”

**Commitment** – this work needs time-frames and scheduling

**Investment** – this work takes time and money

**Accountability** – this work is made public and we hold ourselves accountable

One question we began addressing:

**How can DAMTA advocate for diverse & inclusive pedagogy, and inspire our teachers to examine their own syllabi to purposefully include the often removed history and contributions of BBIPOC composers (Black, Brown, Indigenous, People of Color)?**

One action step our board determined is to build out a resource spreadsheet for our music teachers. Please stay tuned as we work on this project. Here are a few resources we discussed:

**Coloring Book Of Black Composers**

**Teaching Hard History: Grades K-5**

**A Collection of Florence Price's Piano Teaching Music Vol 1. Beginning Pieces**

**Keyboard Music of Black Composers: A Bibliography**

Our discussions, for now, will be for only our Board Members, with plans to eventually broaden our reach to membership. That being said, I would like to extend an invitation to the DAMTA membership to join our Diversity Equity & Inclusion Committee! Please contact our VP of DEI, Deborah De La Torre at: [DLTDenver@yahoo.com](mailto:DLTDenver@yahoo.com) if you are interested in participating.

I look forward to sharing more updates. Thank you for your support, DAMTA!

Ben Raznick

[benraznickmusic@gmail.com](mailto:benraznickmusic@gmail.com)

Lyrics Editor

**How will you celebrate Black History Month with your students?**

Send photos with captions by February 20th to my email for March Lyrics edition.

## DAMTA Spring Program 2021



### January 13 -- Kristin Jordheim – “Music, Culture and Society - a Look at Community Music”

This program will introduce and overview music’s role in the health of a community for music educators and therapists. How does a teaching studio make a difference? What about the actions of a local or state association? How do we live the MTNA theme “Music is for Everyone”?

**Bio:** Kristin Jordheim couldn’t have known that singing at the hospital bed of her grandfather at age four would lead to a career in music therapy and teaching. She holds music therapy and therapeutic recreation degrees from New York University. She is a Music Therapist-Board Certified (MT-BC) who owns a private practice, Advantage Music Therapy, and a teaching studio in Denver. Kristin is active in DAMTA , currently serving as DAMTA Past President, and a member of the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA)



### February 10 -- Solomon Chapman -- “Gifts of Gospel Music”

Pianist Solomon Chapman examines how his trial-by-fire training in Gospel music shaped his philosophy, informed his pedagogy, and equipped him with a skill set that has served him well in other professional music settings. Chapman reflects on pleasant, uncomfortable, and even embarrassing musical experiences in church, experiences that he now considers “gifts” and is eternally grateful. In addition to shedding light on a community and culture that

may not be widely discussed in music education circles, Chapman hopes to challenge music instructors to investigate how elements of the Gospel music learning tradition can be integrated into their own teaching methodology.

**Bio:** A native of Denver, Solomon J. Chapman is a sought-after musician within the Gospel and Jazz communities of Colorado. At age nine, he began formal lessons with pianist Marie Clark. In the same year, he also began serving as lead pianist of his church, St. John Church of God in Christ, under the musical direction of his mother, Christeen Chapman. Through countless performances in concert and liturgical settings as a teenager, Solomon became an active gospel accompanist and collaborator in music-ministry projects in Colorado. He graduated from Overland High School in 2011, gaining such honors as the George Eastman Young Leaders Award and the John Philip Sousa Band.

Solomon received both academic and music talent scholarships to study at the Metropolitan State University of Denver. As a student at MSU Denver, he performed in many areas of the music



program, including the MSU Denver BigBand, JazzCombo, Vocal Accompanying, Classical Chamber Music, and Wind Ensemble. In the Spring of 2016, he graduated Magna Cum Laude from MSU Denver, earning a Bachelor Degree in Music Composition.

Currently, Solomon is active as a composer, arranger, and educator. His works have been featured in local ensembles like The Rhythm of Life Community Chorus and the MSU Denver Wind Ensemble as well as in Colombia, South America through ColomboAmerican Medellín’s 2015 Jazz Camp and Festival. Passionate about music education, Solomon is also the owner of MD Music LLC, a company dedicated to cultivating gospel musicians within the State of Colorado.



**March 10 -- Tenia Nelson -- “Exploring the Life and Music of Mary Lou Williams”**

Mary Lou Williams was an American jazz pianist, arranger, and composer. She wrote hundreds of compositions and arrangements and recorded more than one hundred records.

Williams wrote and arranged for Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman, and she was friend, mentor, and teacher

to Thelonious Monk, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, Tadd Dameron, Bud Powell, and Dizzy Gillespie.

**Bio:** Tenia Nelson is a pianist, percussionist, composer, arranger, and educator. She currently

teaches music at Denver Language School, Neighborhood Music at Stanley Marketplace, and privately in her music studio.

She holds a Bachelor Degree in Music Education Degree from Metropolitan State University of Denver and a Masters of Music Degree (Jazz Studies) from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

In addition to teaching she performs regularly at jazz venues in the Denver. She leads a group called Tenia Nelson Trio (Tenia Nelson, keys; Brendan O' Donoghue, bass; Alex Tripp, drums).



**April 14 - Deborah De La Torre & Ben Raznick -- “Action Steps Toward Becoming Anti-Racist in the Private Music Studio”**

We are witnessing protests across the world fighting for systemic changes and accountability for the way people of color are disenfranchised in our communities.

We see this too in our music communities, whether we take a look at the amount of students of color each teacher has, the

diversity we have within the membership and leadership of our organization, or the amount of

composers of color we include in our curriculum. We don't realize how our private music teaching contributes to systemic racism. Repertoire lists without pieces by composers of color means students will lack awareness of them. This is how "cultural erasure" works. Composers and their works that are continuously absent from catalogues and competitions lead to the assumption that such music simply does not exist. We believe this important work can be addressed through intentional action steps.

**Bio:** Deborah De La Torre has an award-winning music career as a pianist, composer/arranger, educator, Latina/o art festival founder, documentary film producer and recording artist/producer. She received her Bachelor's degree in Music from the University of Miami, Florida, and her MBA in Business Administration from Regis University in Denver. She is passionate about Caribbean, Latin American and Spanish/Iberian musicology, performing as "La Cocodrila" (the lady crocodile) on account of her fierce playing style.

**Bio:** Ben Raznick is a pianist, composer, recording artist and teacher from Colorado. He has trained with piano professors in the US, Argentina, Brazil and Spain. Raznick was selected as a 2x semi-finalist of The American Prize in 2019. He is a recipient of Steinway & Sons prestigious Top Music Teacher Award in 2017, 2018 & 2019, and affiliate faculty at MSU. Raznick's solo piano classical album, Birds of a Feather, features a professionally edited video performance of each work.

## May 12 -- DAMTA Teacher's Musicale

Join DAMTA teachers as they showcase their talents in this awesome Musicale.



DAMTA's 2020 Teachers Performance Group

*"Not only a chance to perform but a chance to learn and an opportunity for feedback"*

# Celebrating Denver's African American Musical Heritage

## Joseph F. Keel, Jennifer Ford Keel and JoFoKe

By Deborah De La Torre, DAMTA Newsletter, February 2021  
(This article has been reviewed and edited by the Artist and her family)



Source: [JoFoKe.com](https://www.jofoke.com)

**JoFoKe (Joslyn Ford Keel)** is the daughter of Joe Keel and Jennifer Ford Keel, and a multi-genre musician who, according to her parents, started singing before she could even form words. [JoFoKe](https://www.jofoke.com) (pronounced: Joh-Foh-Kee) grew up immersed in the arts. She took dance lessons at Eulipions Cultural Center in Five Points and studied piano with Patricia Chen. JoFoKe made her professional performance debut at 5 and, with mentorship from her parents and her late uncle Winston Ford, was a working session singer by her teens. In addition to receiving private creative instruction, JoFoKe grew artistically through singing with her musical family, in local community choirs, as a music major at Denver School of the Arts at Cole

Middle School, in Angelaires at Denver East High School and honed her leadership skills at New Hope Baptist Church where she started teaching and directing the church's then 150 voice adult choir at age 13. A native of Denver, CO JoFoKe moved to Nashville, TN in 2000 to attend Fisk University where she became a touring member of the world renown Fisk Jubilee Singers. JoFoKe earned her Bachelor of Arts in Music from Fisk, and worked as a singer and vocal producer in Tennessee through late 2012.

Upon her return to Colorado, JoFoKe embarked on a self managed, solo artist career and established JoFoKe, LLC. The LLC is a music contracting business that aims to create stage and studio opportunities, music education & mentorship and professional access for Black musicians in Colorado. The business also houses her music publisher KeelinEmSoftly Tunes and her bands [JoFoKe aNem](https://www.jofoke.com) and [Same Cloth](https://www.jofoke.com), a duo project with multi-genre pianist and fellow music educator [Solomon Chapman](https://www.jofoke.com) (DAMTA feature on February 10, 2021). JoFoKe also shares her talents, cultivates her sound and increases her presence on the live music scene with three additional Colorado based bands. Those bands are: Trust Phall, The [Anisha Rush Quartet](https://www.jofoke.com) and with [Brionne Aigne](https://www.jofoke.com) (a Berkley School of Music graduate, Miss Black Colorado 2015 and former middle school music educator

featured on BET's Next Big Thing in 2019). A highly sought-after and Grammy nominated music professional, JoFoKe was tapped by Metro State University at Denver music department in 2019 to manage their commercial music partnership, the Detroit Institute of Music Education at Denver. DIME-Denver was one of several casualties of COVID-19 however, JoFoKe is currently reprising her role as a commercial music professor in the MSU Denver Music Department. In an effort to help remove the stigma attached to mental illness, JoFoKe started sharing about her own battle with mental illness onstage in 2016. Citing her debut single, [Count](https://www.jofoke.com) as inspiration, audience members started reaching out for varied mediums of help. As a result, JoFoKe developed the [Count Joy Network](https://www.jofoke.com) with her sister, Stacie Alexander to raise awareness about mental health issues primarily in the Black community. CJN works to connect individuals to therapy, suicide prevention and toward ending the



Source: [JoFoKe.com](https://www.jofoke.com)





Source: [JoFoKe.com](http://JoFoKe.com)

stigma attached to mental illness & psychological health care. Although she speaks about all of her music educators with great esteem, Joslyn aims to be the musical mentor that she needed as a budding artist. One of her greatest concerns is the loss of music education programs in public schools, particularly in the early grades. She challenges current assumptions that students can just “jump into” high school music programs without the benefit of resources and exposure to music training in elementary and middle school, or that private lessons are easily accessible. You can watch JoFoKe aNem’s recent video-on-demand performance (\$10) [HERE](#).

**Jennifer Ford Keel**, a Denver native, is both a professional musician and educator. Her late parents, Erma L. Ford, an educator and long time director of the George Washington Carver Day School and C. Winston Ford Sr., an Air Force veteran and Butcher became popular through the state of Colorado singing with the Harmoners and Harmonettes, respectively. Ford Keel and her siblings, the late Wynnette Ford King and the late C. Winston Ford, Jr also took piano lessons with Alberta Chen and sang around the city of Denver as the Ford-O-Matics throughout their childhood. Educated in the Denver Public School system, all three Ford children graduated from Manual High School. Ford Keel attended the historic Fisk University in Nashville and worked as a session vocalist during her time in Tennessee. Following college graduation and upon her return to Denver, Jennifer started her career as an elementary school teacher and jumped right back into the artists community, performing in community productions. In 1974, Ford Keel joined the cast of a local production of “Don’t Bother Me, I Can’t Cope,” a musical revue that focuses on aspects of the Black American experience. After the show’s run, the musical director and Ford Keel’s future husband, asked her to join his new band, Joe Keel & the Action Orchestra.



Jennifer & Joseph Keel, JoFoKe’s Parents.  
Source: JoFoKe

Ford Keel continued to perform, teach grades 4-6 and direct multiple church choirs. She also earned a Master's degree in Education from University of Northern Colorado. Ford Keel retired from the classroom after 33 years and has remained employed in education in the 16 years since. Currently, she teaches Music of the African Diaspora through a partnership with Denver Public Schools. Ford Keel also serves as the Musical Director of the Central Region of [Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.](#) and the director of the Deltarets, the Denver Alumnae Chapter’s troupe of singing Deltas founded by her mother, Erma Ford in 1947. Her two daughters, Stacie and Joslyn serve alongside their mother in Delta endeavors.



Joe Keel performs with his trio.  
Source: [PBS: Jazz In Five Points](http://PBS: Jazz In Five Points)

**Joseph F. Keel**, the ninth of ten children, was born and raised in Denver. His mother, the late Mabel M. Keel was a



registered nurse and Denver silent movies pianist and his father, the late Sherman S. Keel was a chef and trumpeter who shared the stage with Louis Armstrong. Keel started playing “Boogie Woogie” on the black keys of the piano by-ear when he was 3 years old. He would go on to receive formal music training upright bass at Loyola Catholic Grade School and on saxophone from Gene Orkin, an orchestra bassoonist. Keel was also a member of the Denver Junior Police Band under the direction of George V. Roy with two of his brothers, Vernon and Billy. Keel remained self-taught on piano and would later be regarded as one of Colorado’s most prolific pianists.



Source: [PBS: Jazz In Five Points](#)

Keel got his first professional opportunity when he was 9 years old. Hogie Harper asked the Keel parents’ permission for young Joseph to play alto saxophone with Harper’s big band at the legendary Rossonian Hotel. Although he was able to play the music, Harper and his colleagues encouraged Keel to grow into playing with feeling. He did not understand the older musicians’ advice at that time but the advice would inform Keel’s artistry and his own mentorship for the remainder of his career.

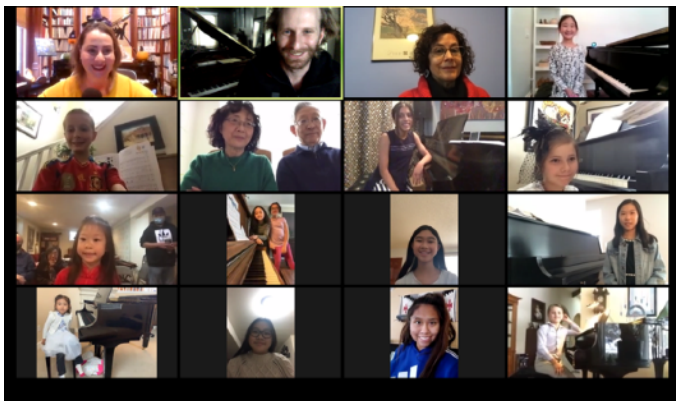
Keel excelled in both, sports and music throughout his secondary education at Regis High School, ultimately transferring to and graduated from Manual High School in Denver. Keel went on to attend Eastman School of Music until military service interrupted his matriculation. Keel served in the United States Army, playing saxophone in the Army Band while stationed in Korea. After his tour of duty, Keel returned to the states and resumed his education at Kansas State University. Keel briefly lived in Chicago where networking and his talent opened the door for him to bump shoulders with musical contemporaries and legends like Ella Fitzgerald, Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock and Calvin Keys.

Keel returned to Denver, taught music at Hill Middle and Manual High school and became a mentor to younger musical professionals. He also built several bands; most notably the Action Orchestra and the Joe Keel Trio. Keel toured as a keyboardist with Kenny Rogers, Freddy Hubbard, Johnny Adams, James Van Buren and the DePreist Project among others from the 1970s through the 1990s. Keel served as the first musical director for [Cleo Parker Robinson Dance](#), musical director on several Eulipion Cultural Center productions, director of special musical projects for Denver’s first Black Mayor, Wellington E. Webb and the Honorable Wilma J. Webb, and he remained an active, in-demand professional until his retirement from the stage in 2000. Keel currently serves on the JoFoKe, LLC team as a consultant, mentor, songwriter and proud t-shirt wearer.

Keel’s band colleagues credit his abilities to foster a family-like culture and insistence on a standard of excellence for his popularity. His groups’ preparedness and palpable chemistry routinely made first time concertgoers into lifelong fans. In 1977, Keel conceived and produced a family-friendly Fourth of July concert that featured Joe Keel & the Action Orchestra, “Jazz in the Park”. Re-branded as City Park Jazz, the event became an official city-wide series in 1986, with Keel serving on the board and playing his signature Fourth of July concert through the year 2000.

Although never commercially released, his numerous recordings are of significant historical value in light of the noteworthy musical contributions made by Denver’s African American community. Keel’s family is working to restore, release and archive these recordings. Watch the excerpt from Rocky Mountain PBS the [Jazz In Five Points](#) documentary highlighting Joe Keel [HERE](#).

## Virtual Musicales 2021



Even though we can't get together for the time being, musicales will still take place every month on Zoom for the time being! Please note the following changes for musicales this year:

- \* Online musicales will be limited to 45 minutes.
- \* There will be no fee to perform in musicales, however donations to our scholarship fund will be encouraged.

\* Some musicales will have designated themes, but any performer is encouraged to participate even if their piece is not related to the theme.

- \* As long as musicales are online, more creativity can be encouraged for performances; this can include staging, including family members in the performance or whatever the students can come up with!

### Save these upcoming dates!

February 21 at 2:00 (celebrating Black History Month)

March 21 at 2:00

April 18 at 2:00 (feature duets and ensemble music)

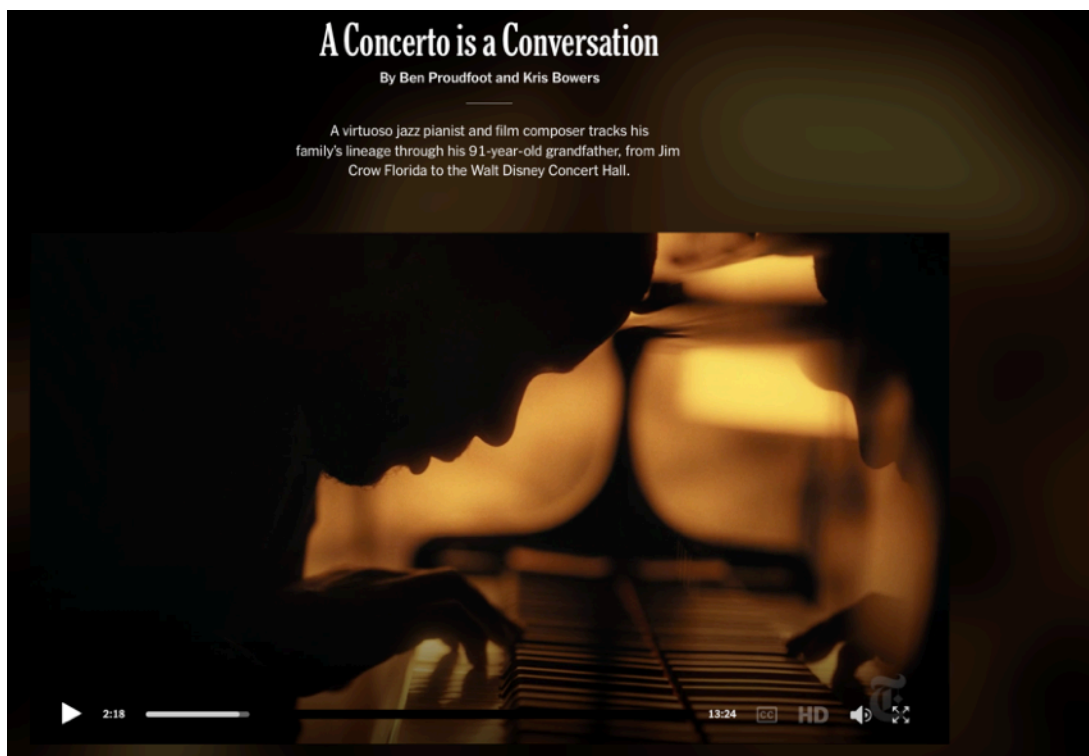
May 16 at 12:00

**Please send the names of students and pieces they'll perform to our February host by Wednesday, February 17th. Zoom link will be sent to teachers on Friday, February 19th:**

Ben Raznick [benraznickmusic@gmail.com](mailto:benraznickmusic@gmail.com)

If you have any questions about this year's changes or anything else about musicales, you may contact the musicale chair Megan Koegel at [missmeganpiano@gmail.com](mailto:missmeganpiano@gmail.com).

Submitted by Ben Raznick

**OP-DOCS AT SUNDANCE 2021**

Every year, the Sundance Film Festival brings thousands to Park City, Utah. This year, the festival is virtual, and we're bringing you three short documentaries to watch from the comfort of your home

Watch online here:

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/01/28/opinion/sundance-opdocs-2021.html?referringSource=articleShare>

*Tale of the Music  
Teacher*

Submitted by Evelyn Billberg

Members are invited to check out the Tale of the Music Teachers website at

<http://www.teachertales.net/phyllis-pieffer.html>

A new section has been added to the site: "Member Spotlight" and now contains an article on Phyllis Pieffer. Plans for this portion of the website are to interview members of local associations. I will be reaching out to each LA and developing articles about their members. I will be looking to interview DAMTA members for inclusion in this spotlight.

Evelyn Billberg, Project Coordinator, Tale of the Music Teachers Project



Submitted by Evelyn Billberg

**APPLY TODAY  
TO RESERVE  
YOUR SPOT**

**ENROLL NOW!**

**LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

**from April through June**

**LIVE VIRTUAL EVENTS**

**from June 4th - 13th**

**EVENTS INCLUDE:**

- Student Coaching Sessions
- Workshops and Concerts
- Optional Masterclasses and Private Lessons are available for additional fee

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adjudicators, teaching artists, and clinicians provide students of all ages and teachers with a powerful and uplifting learning experience.



*Top L to R:  
Wynn-Anne Rossi, Kevin Olson  
Bottom L to R:  
Evan Mazunik, Martha Hill Duncan*



**FIRST EVER**

**VIRTUAL  
FESTIVAL!**

**JUNE 4-13, 2021**



**This festival is part of a GROWING MOVEMENT whose battle cry is in John Salmon's words:**

*“to loosen the strictures of perfectionism & literalism that have gradually eviscerated the interpreter's art in this age of 'note-perfect' recordings & competitions, & to reemphasize the beautiful, the imaginative.”*

**CONTACT**

**Evelyn Billberg**, Program Director

Ev.billberg@gmail.com

**(303) 629-9209**

**DONATIONS NEEDED**

**THE ONLY  
COMPETITION OF ITS KIND  
IN THE WORLD**

**OPEN TO ALL AGES!**

**PIANO STUDENTS**

of all ages submit a 10-15 min. performance &

**COMPETE FOR  
UNIQUE AWARDS**

Student creativity is encouraged, with an opportunity to further develop their skills and a diversity of repertoire.

**MANY AWARDS**

For Repertory Excellence, Creativity, & Versatility (any style)

**SPECIAL AWARDS**

For Original Compositions

**3 AGE GROUP CATEGORIES:**

**BUDDING PIANIST**

*(up to age 12)*

**TEEN PIANIST**

*(age 13 to 19)*

**LIFELONG LEARNER**

*(age 20 +)*

All participants are also highly encouraged to submit an optional written composition for feedback, and to engage in all on-line learning activities.

**HELP US  
CELEBRATE OUR 20TH  
ANNIVERSARY!**



**SPONSORED BY ABUNDANT SILENCE**

[www.abundantsilence.org/festival-homepage.html](http://www.abundantsilence.org/festival-homepage.html)



# DAMTA-Passalongs

## DAMTA's closed Google group for members

- Notices in addition to official DAMTA business.
- Announcements and passalong emails that may be of interest to DAMTA members.
- News of teachers workshops, competitions, special sales, instruments for sale privately, auditions, concerts, recitals etc.

All current year DAMTA members have access. The default option is to receive emails as they come in. You change your setting to receive a digest email or no emails at all. If you choose no emails you can view DAMTA-Passalongs at <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/damta-passalongs>

# Newsletter Submissions

- Submit all Flyers/Announcements as an email attachment to [benraznickmusic@gmail.com](mailto:benraznickmusic@gmail.com) no later than the 20th of each month.
- DAMTA issues the Lyrics Newsletter as a monthly edition from September-May, with a double edition in December/January.