

STAFFLINES

Monthly Newsletter of the Tidewater Music Teachers Forum

Dr. William Pearson

From Patterns to Possibilities: Teaching Creativity Across Genres



Friday, January 16th, 2026

Location: Old Dominion University
1339 West 49th Street, Norfolk VA 23529

10:00 Business Meeting & Workshop

12:00 Lunch

Dr. William Pearson is a teacher, composer, and organist. He is currently the Coordinator of Music Theory and Aural Skills at Old Dominion University and the Organist at Larchmont United Methodist Church. His compositional practice is split between writing experimental acoustic chamber music derived from handmade graphic scores, and film music derived from recorded improvisation and digital processing. Recent works include *The Amphibian*, which was toured throughout the US and Russia by The Fifth House Ensemble in collaboration with the Tuvan throat-singing ensemble Alash, and several film scores for Aeon Magazine. His academic research questions how notation, performance, and listening work together as a form of musical communication, and he folds those insights into hands-on lessons that help students hear, question, and shape music for themselves.

Workshop Description:

This workshop introduces participants to three often-overlooked music-theoretical tools—Neo-Riemannian harmonic analysis, syntactic/semantic lyric analysis, and groove theory—and shows how each can help students forge creative and interpretive links across genres and styles. Together we will turn these ideas into practical compositional, improvisational, and interpretive exercises, enabling students to see how theory informs practice and to discover fresh connections among all the music they make and hear.



President's Letter January 2026



This is our first Stafflines for 2026 and I am excited to begin this new year of many possibilities. I have much to be thankful for and, at the time of this writing, am celebrating Christmas week. I have “made it” through the hustle of the many “back to school” deadlines and projects and now am relaxing and enjoying some much-needed time of rest, reflection, and rejuvenation.

I am so pleased with our wonderful TMTF members and all that we were able to accomplish during the past three months. I was so happy with our workshops and attendance, and our Sacred Music Festival, Play-A-Thon, and Citywide Recital could not have been better. Thank you to all who helped to make these a success! My students have really enjoyed participating and have learned so much by preparing for these events. Also special thanks to Laura Cardin for stepping in to represent us at the VMTA State Convention- we knew we were in good hands!

January and February will be busy months for TMTF as they include student preparation for our statewide theory, skills, and sight-reading testing. Our monthly workshops will continue to be informative and fun. Please help us to spread the word about MTNA, which is celebrating its 150th year, and feel free to contact me with any new ideas for our local chapter. I look forward to seeing you in 2026!

Musically Yours,
Sally

2026 VMTA Theory Test

It's time to get ready for the 2026 VMTA Theory Test!

Dates:	January 31 st , 2026
Registration Deadline:	December 19 th , 2025
Registration Fee:	\$15.00
Prerequisites or Post-requisites:	Theory test completion required to participate in the VMTA District Auditions
Requirements:	Written exam, leveled 1-12, based on musical knowledge (not school grade).
Chairperson:	Susan Atkins, NCTM 4357 Biscayne Drive, Virginia Beach VA 23455 (757) 282-8220 pianolearningcenter@gmail.com
Chairperson:	Sally Copeland 116 Tyler Crescent, Portsmouth VA 23707 (757) 376-7348 srcopela@odu.edu
Location:	Old Dominion University Webb Center 1301 W 49 th St Norfolk, VA 23529

For detailed instructions and registration form, please see the Studio Companion for 2025-2026.

Thank you!
Susan Atkins

2026 Sight-Reading and Skills Test

The VMTA Helen Parker Sight Reading will be administered with the VMTA Skills Tests on -

Sunday, February, 22, 2026
at Diehn Performing Arts Center
Old Dominion University

The registration DEADLINE is **January 16, 2026**. The POSTMARK date is the same as the DEADLINE date.

There will be no make-up dates.

Syllabus is available from the State Chairperson. Detail information and the application forms can be found in the TMTF Studio Companion 2025-2026.

Please encourage your students to participate in these tests as the preparation involved in preparing will definitely be education and rewarding for them.

Local Chairperson

Mun Lee Han
(757)-214-5439
munleehan@gmail.com

Skills Test State Chairperson

Lynn Kleisler
(757)-925-0248
lynnkleisler@yahoo.com

Sight Reading Test State Chairperson

Fay Barss
(804)-282-7725
faysmusic@gmail.com

MTNA Certification



Let's get certified!

The MTNA Professional Certification Program exists to improve the level of professionalism within the field of music teaching. It benefits the members of the profession itself, as well as the public who interacts with the professional. For the music teaching professional, certification provides prestige, recognition and the potential for student recruitment and increased earning power. For the public, certification helps readily identify competent music teachers in their communities.

Monthly local certification meetings are held via Zoom. Watch the Stafflines and your email inbox for the day and time of each meeting.

VMTA and TMTF are offering a \$100 reimbursement each (total \$200) to offset the cost of certification.

You too can be an NCTM (Nationally Certified Teacher of Music).

For more information, go to certification.mtna.org.

Certification meeting schedule:

September 19

October 10

November 14

January 9

February 13

March 6

April 10

May 8

10:00-11:30 am on Zoom

2025-2026 Local Chairperson:

Susan Atkins, NCTM

4357 Biscayne Drive

Virginia Beach, VA 23455

(757) 282-8220

pianolearningcenter@gmail.com

Levels of Progress 2026

Registration Deadline: January 16, 2026 (postmark)
Event Dates: March 7th and 8th (Details are in the Studio Companion)

Levels of Progress is a non-competitive opportunity for students of all levels to receive a performance evaluation on two contrasting pieces. Students may enter in piano, voice, organ, strings, guitar, or ensembles. Each student receives an evaluation sheet and a certificate of achievement. Judges are local teachers and members of TMTF.

Levels of Progress is also TMTF's major fundraising event for the year, so please make sure to encourage and prepare your students to participate! This allows us to continue to provide quality presenters for our meetings and additional opportunities for our teachers and students. Remember, Levels of Progress is a requirement to enter the Honors Recitals Auditions!

Please mail, email, or deliver registration forms to the event chair by the deadline:

Chairperson: Joshua Miller
Address: 9511 1st View Street #4
Norfolk, VA 23503
Email: tmtf.lop@gmail.com

TMTF Play-A-Thon

Please remind your students to turn in their pledge money to you. For students to qualify for one of the three top monetary prizes (\$100, \$75 or \$50), their pledge money has to be turned in to me by the deadline date of **January 31st**. The final deadline date for all pledge money to be turned in is March 1st for students to be eligible to participate in the D.C. Glover Scholarship Auditions or Glen Mayberry Scholarship Auditions or receive money through the Louise Garrow Scholarship.

The pledge money (checks only) with a completed **"Teacher's Studio Schedule and Pledge Validation Form"** sheet should be mailed to me. Please **do not send** me your student's pledge sheets. I only need the "Teacher Studio Schedule and Pledge Validation Form" completed with the student names and money collected. This helps me to determine who receives one of the top three cash prizes.

Many thanks to all of you who helped make this event successful!

Lynn Kleisler, NCTM
TMTF Play-A-Thon Chairman

Concert at King's Grant Presbyterian Church

Please put on your calendars Dr. Eric Ruple in Concert on Sunday, January 25th at 2:00pm. The program is outstanding!

About the program:

The Piano Recital for King's Grant Presbyterian Church will include two sonatas by Beethoven: the beloved Op. 13 "Pathetique" Sonata (a relatively early work) and one of his most forward-looking, late sonatas, the beautiful Op. 109.

In between the Beethoven sonatas will be the lyrical three "Petrarch Sonnets" by Franz Liszt, and a couple short works by modern women composers.

King's Grant Presbyterian Church
745 Little Neck Road
Va Beach, VA 23452

About the artist:

Steinway Artist Eric Ruple is on the piano faculty at James Madison University. He enjoys an active career as a solo and chamber musician, including several performances at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC and Steinway Hall in New York. For a number of years, he was pianist for the Virginia Symphony Orchestra, including several "Harry Potter Live" shows and pianist for Bernstein's "Prelude, Fugue and Riffs" with the VSO Jazz Ensemble. His recording "Musica Incognito" with hornist Ian Zook has earned unanimously positive review from several national and international publications. A second CD with violinist Brendon Elliott, both in Virginia and on WQXR: National Public Radio, New York City.

He is a member of the American Liszt Society and has been a regular adjudicator in Hong Kong. He twice served as Interim Director for the JMU School of music.

Get Involved in TMTF!

We have plenty of opportunities to get involved in by helping with events, such as judging, administering various tests, auditions and recitals. These are excellent opportunities to contribute your talent and connect with other music teachers.

Contact the event chairperson or president or president-elect for opportunities you are interested in helping out with.

We would greatly appreciate your presence!

TMTF EVENT CALENDAR

January 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

1 New Year's Day
 9 TMTF Certification Meeting
 16 DEADLINE - VMAT Keyboard Skills/Sight Reading Tests
 16 DEADLINE - TMTF Levels of Progress
16 TMTF Meeting/Workshop
 18 Martin Luther King Jr. Day
 21 DEADLINE - Stafflines News
 31 VMAT Theory Test - ODU
 31 DEADLINE - Play-A-Thon Pledges to Teacher

February 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

1 DEADLINE - Student Recital - Norfolk
 6 TMTF Executive Board Meeting (Zoom or Google Meet)
 13 TMTF Certification Meeting
 15 Student Recital - Norfolk - Royster Memorial Presbyterian Church
 ? Student Recital - Portsmouth
 18 President's Day
20 TMTF Meeting/Workshop
 20 DEADLINE - Stafflines News
 22 TMTF Sight Reading/Keyboard Skills Test - ODU



January

5 Hugh Middleton
 7 Geraldine T. Boone
 20 Susan Grice
 27 Emily Denniston
 28 Jeanette Winsor

February

22 Alisa Bohon
 25 Katherine Wright





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Stafflines Advertising Rates

The following advertising rates are for Stafflines news that is not related directly to TMTF activities.

Two to three line announcement such as a recital or job opening : No Fee

One half page (8.5" x 5.5") : \$10.00

Full page (8.5" x 11") : \$20.00

Make check payable to TMTF and send along with your ad to the Stafflines Editor

Piano Showcase
pianoshowcaseva.com
Greenbrier Mall

J. Scott Bailey
President

(757) 420-1130
(757) 714-3307 Cell
pianoshowcaseva@yahoo.com

KAWAI



Tidewater Music Teachers Forum

Local Chapter of the Virginia Music Teachers Association Affiliated
with the Music Teachers National Association

Violet Cusher, Editor | 31 Sinton Road | Newport News, VA 23601