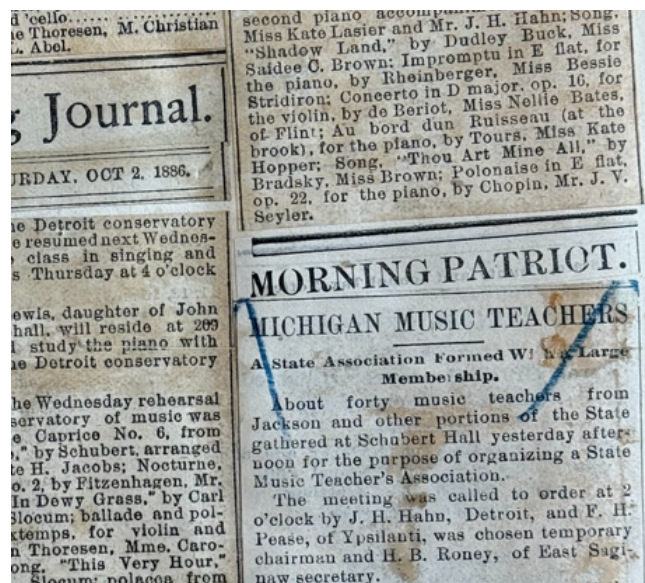


# History of the Michigan Music Teachers Association

Dr. Tristan McKay, NCTM | September 2025

## Founding of the MMTA

The Michigan Music Teachers Association (MMTA) was established in 1885 in Jackson, Michigan. About forty music teachers representing the leading musical minds from across the state of Michigan gathered at Schubert Hall for the founding meeting, which was called to order by J. H. Hahn of Detroit, F. H. Pease of Ypsilanti, and H. B. Roney of East Saginaw.



“Michigan Music Teachers” from *Morning Patriot*  
Excerpt from MMTA Scrapbook (1867, 1894)

At that first gathering, J. H. Hahn outlined the objectives of the nascent Michigan Music Teachers Association, declaring that “an association of this character should give new force and prove an incentive towards advancing the interests of the musical art in our State; it furnishes an opportunity for mutual improvement by the interchange of ideas, opinions and experiences.”

Hahn was adamant that the MMTA would provide mentorship and professional development opportunities to teachers of all ages and experience levels, with the goal of “broadening, cultivating, and educating” its members.



Portrait of J.H. Hahn (1890)

By this time, Hahn was already a big name in music education. Just over a decade earlier, in 1874, he founded the Detroit Conservatory of Music, which went on to become one of the leading institutions of music in the United States. He would later serve as President of the MMTA from 1889–1890 and again from 1898–1899.

At the founding meeting of the MMTA, the chair appointed a committee on permanent organization consisting of C. B. Cady of Ann Arbor, A. C. Swezey of Jackson, and C. B. Scheffler of Albion. Membership fees were placed at \$1.00, and the annual dues \$1.00, payable at the annual meeting.

After a short recess, during which the present members signed the constitution and paid their fees, a set of bylaws were adopted. A committee of five was appointed on nomination of officers and after a short intermission they reported the following officers for the ensuing year: F. H. Pease of Ypsilanti would serve as President, H. B. Roney of East Saginaw as Secretary, and Kate M. Kedzie of Lansing as Treasurer.

Officers were also appointed for the Executive Committee, Programme Committee, and Committee on Examination of Compositions of Michigan Composers. The report was adopted, and a representative board was left to the executive committee.

Mayor Bennett of Jackson was also in attendance and offered words of support for the MMTA. After the meeting adjourned, many of the delegates took afternoon trains to return to their homes.

## **First Annual Meeting**

The first annual meeting of the MMTA was held at the Hibbard Opera House in Jackson on June 30 and July 1, 1887. At this first meeting, Frederick H. Pease gave the presidential address and Emma A. Thomas of Detroit delivered an essay on “The Importance of Music Study in the Public Schools,” a subject that continued to shape educational discourse within the organization for years to come.

By 1908, the MMTA annual meeting had grown to be recognized as one of the great musical events of the state. An announcement for the twenty-first annual meeting of the MMTA described it as “the most effective agency for stimulating the culture and growth of

**M. M. T. A.**  
**Membership Certificate**  
This is to certify that \_\_\_\_\_  
is an **ACTIVE MEMBER** in good standing  
of the  
**MICHIGAN MUSIC TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION**  
for the year  
\_\_\_\_\_  
VICE PRESIDENT **1912** PRESIDENT  
FOR COUNTY OF \_\_\_\_\_ SECRETARY  
AMERICAN TYPE CO. LITHO.

As of 2025, the MMTA annual conference is still going strong in its 139<sup>th</sup> year. The annual meetings continue to provide community building and networking opportunities, vital professional development, and a united sense of purpose and belonging that brings together music educators from across the state of Michigan.





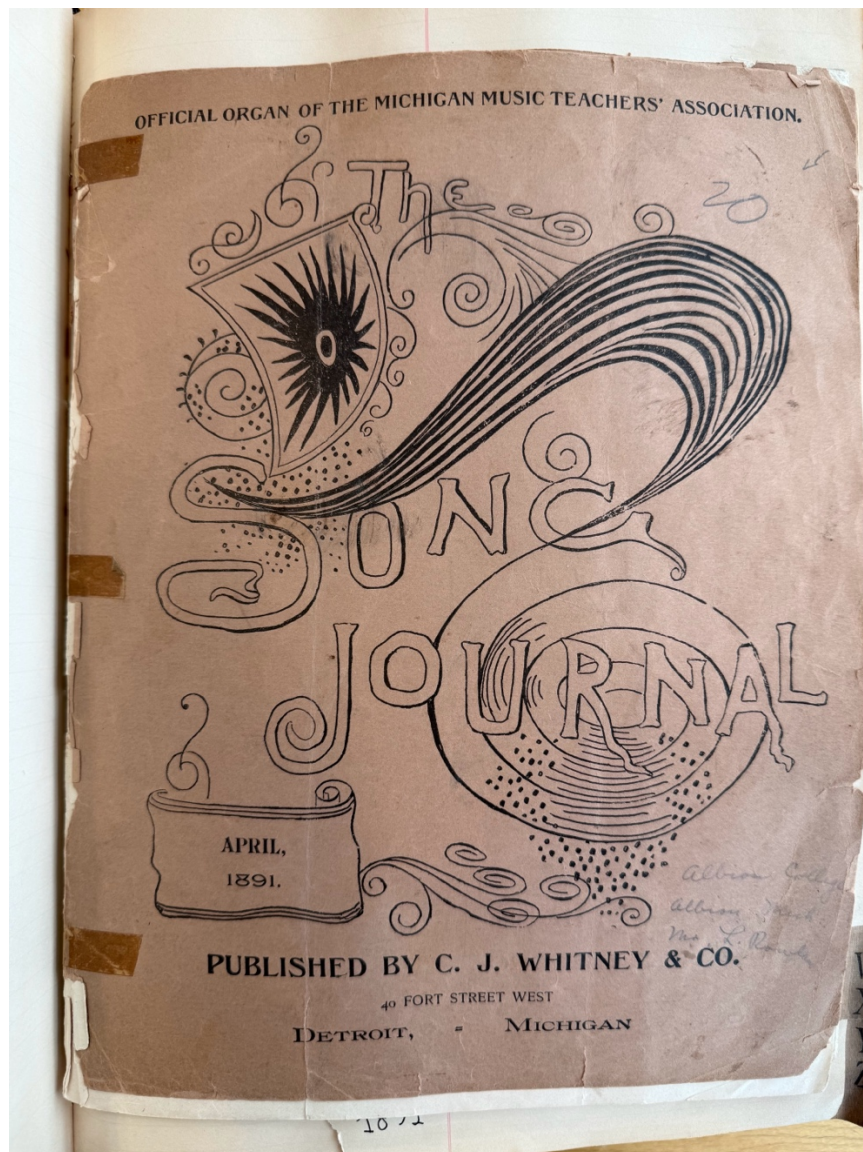
Michigan Music Teachers Association 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Convention Banquet (1928)



Michigan Music Teachers Association in Detroit (1950)

## Publications

Throughout its history, the MMTA has produced a number of publications to support the work of its members. In the late 1800s, *The Song Journal* published by C. J. Whitney & Company served as the MMTA's official organ and contained articles about music, advertisements, and sheet music.



*The Song Journal* published by C. J. Whitney & Co. (1891)



In September 1955, the MMTA published a new quarterly periodical called *The Michigan Music Teacher*, which was wholly dedicated to topics related to the organization and its members.

The first issue opened with a message from President Olaf W. Steg, who urged members to attend the annual convention and to remain involved in voting on important matters related to the organization: "You have elected the Board of Directors to conduct the affairs of your association, but YOU ARE M.M.T.A. Only you, the membership-at-large, may make, alter, amend, or repeal By-Laws of the association."



*The Michigan Music Teacher* Vol. 1, no. 1 (1955)

Today, the MMTA continues the tradition set forth by *The Michigan Music Teacher* with [seasonal newsletters](#) that are published on the MMTA website.

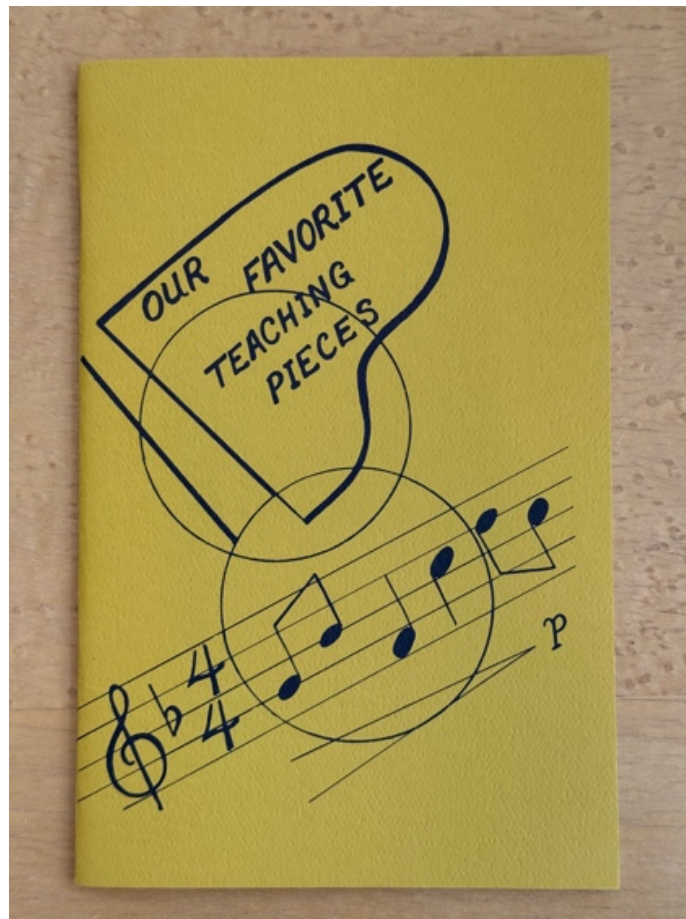


MMTA Workshop at Central Michigan College, Mt. Pleasant (1956)

The MMTA has also published a number of materials related to pedagogy and piano repertoire. The *Piano Teacher's Guide*, published in 1961, was a comprehensive resource intended to aid teachers in planning repertoire and curricula for students. Headed by Chairman Pauline Edkin Arnold and committee members Vera Brown Lewis and John Shelby Richardson, the *Guide* built upon the previous Syllabus of 1954 and its 1959 Supplement.



The *Guide* included materials on elementary education, the body of classical piano literature from early keyboard music to music of the twentieth century, ensemble music, and reference lists of books and publishers for additional teaching resources. Repertoire from key composers of each major period of music history was broken down into categories such as “Introductory Collections” and “Standard Works,” and all were graded in a range of five difficulty levels.



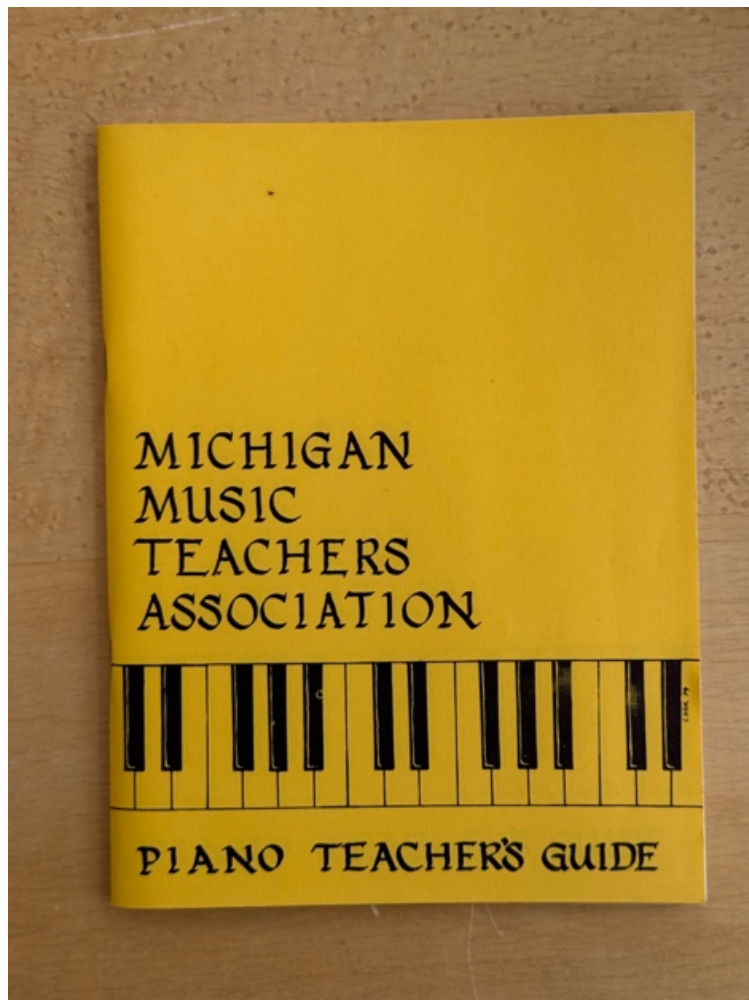
*Our Favorite Teaching Pieces* published by the MMTA (1970)

In 1970, the MMTA published a collection of essays submitted by music educators in Michigan entitled *Our Favorite Teaching Pieces*. Jean Stark introduced the publication as “a

secret personal storehouse of teaching knowledge, a treasury of past experience designed to enlighten and inspire the teaching of the present.”

Robert Hord, who was then President of MMTA, contributed an article entitled “Some Aspects of Memorizing.” Other articles focused on specific oft-performed repertoire such as Chopin’s Waltz in E Minor, Beethoven’s Für Elise, and Mozart’s Fantasy in D Minor K397.

An updated version of the *Piano Teacher’s Guide* was published in 1974, an endeavor spearheaded by Chairman Anthony Kooiker and committee members Vera Brown Lewis and Albert J. Fillmore.

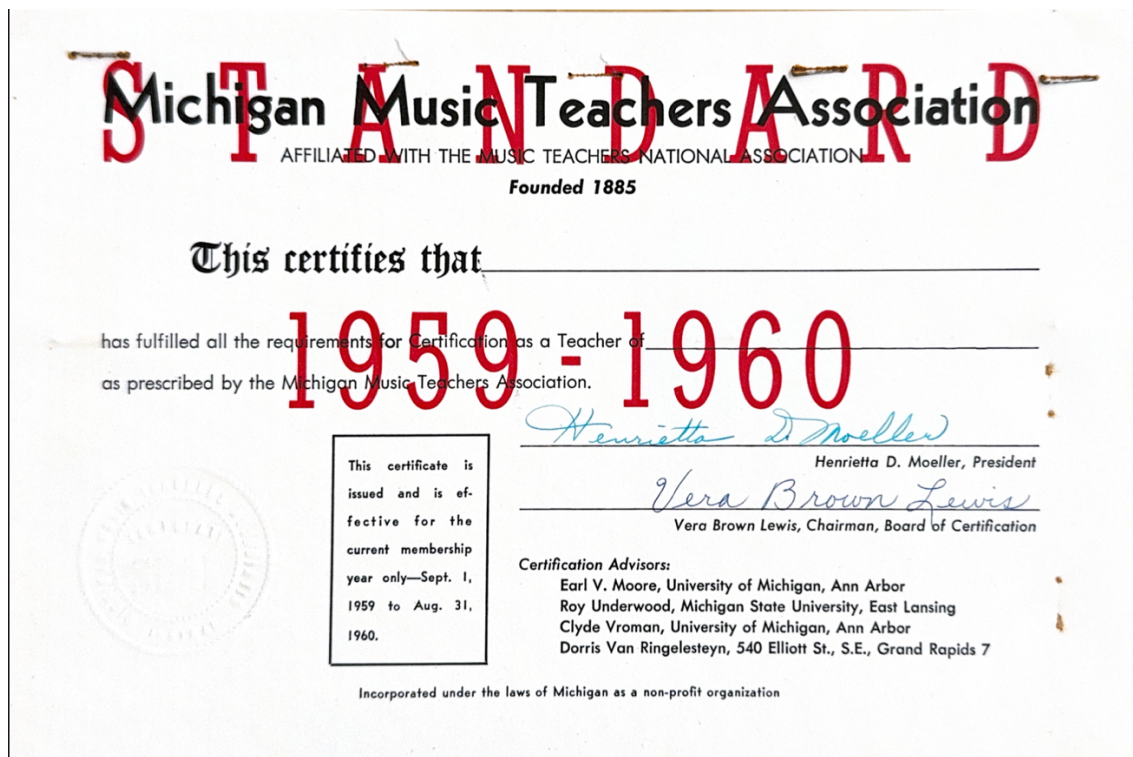


*Piano Teacher’s Guide* published by MMTA (1974)

## Teacher Certification

In the mid-1940s, the MMTA began to discuss the creation of a statewide music teacher certification program. A committee on Certification of Private Teachers of Music was appointed at the October 1947 convention held in Grand Rapids.

The first certificates were presented to teachers at the annual convention banquet on October 15, 1951 at the Durant Hotel in Flint, after several years of development and experimentation. The following year, a total of 175 teachers were certified by the MMTA.

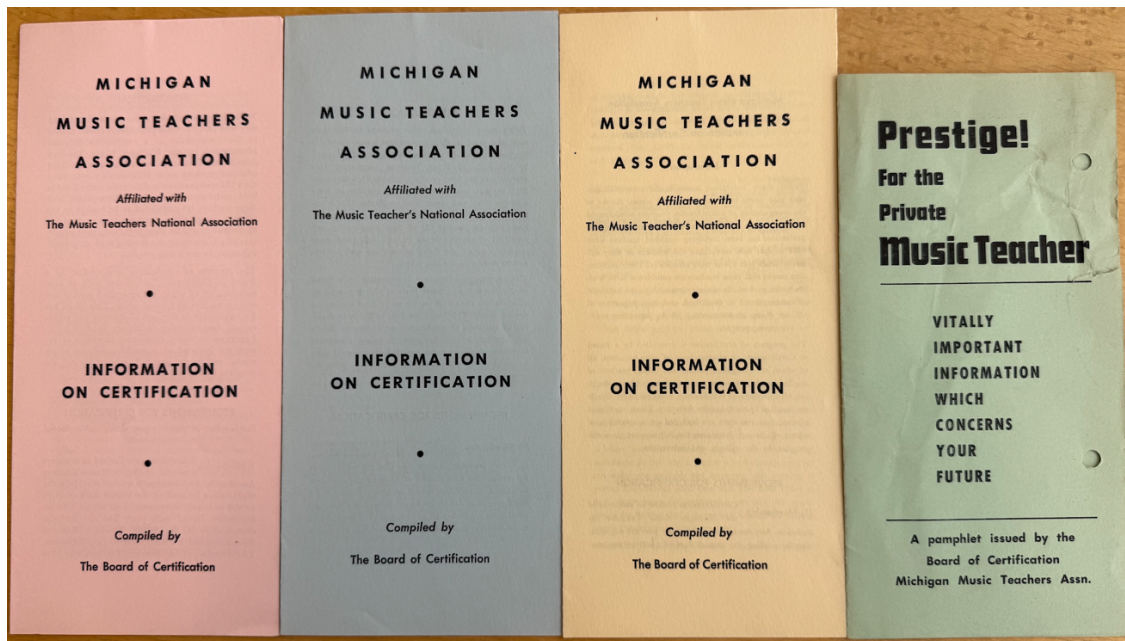


MMTA Teacher Certificate (1959–1960)

This certification recognized experienced teachers who wished to further demonstrate their teaching skills through written examinations, an hour-long oral examination before the board, and graded student performances.



National certification through the Music Teachers National Association first became available in 1967. Today, the MTNA continues to provide music educators with the opportunity to become a Nationally Certified Teacher of Music (NCTM).



MMA teacher certification pamphlets (1968)

## Home Teaching Advocacy

In the early 1990s, state lawmakers worked three bills (SB 507, 509, and 510) amending city, township, and county zoning acts to prevent them from prohibiting home music lessons and home tutorials. These bills would legalize in-home commercial music lessons in residential neighborhoods, something that was technically prohibited in many Michigan municipalities.

While the Senate initially passed the measures, they died in the House and the process had to be started over again. Between 1993 and 1994, members of MMA actively

called and wrote to lawmakers with testimonials imploring lawmakers to take action to protect the rights of music educators to earn a living teaching from home.

On December 27, 1994 — after seven years and two unsuccessful attempts — Governor John Engler signed into law bills prohibiting cities, counties, and townships from issuing violations to music teachers teaching in their homes.

**PROTECT HOME TEACHING ENVIRONMENT**  
**CONTACT YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVE NOT SENATOR !**

The home acoustic studio provides a library and listening facilities.

The home provides a nurturing environment which gives comfort to young and older students alike.

The home computer provides a 21st century electronic studio for creative learning of theory, composition, computer music writing and recording techniques.

**REPS MUST VOTE YES ON "MUSIC BILLS"**  
**507 509 510**  
**TELL STUDENTS AND FRIENDS TO CALL, TOO**

"Protect Home Teaching Environment" flyer (early 1990s)