



Welcome to the latest edition of **eNEWS** – the **PMEA Retired Member Network**... an informal alliance and forum for interconnecting retired **and retiring** music educators, sharing their ideas, stories, successes, news, and views. Thanks for staying involved!

“Best” (or “worst”) retirement jokes – You be the judge!

<https://www.thinkadvisor.com/2019/09/24/15-of-the-best-retirement-jokes/>

These pre-pandemic quips have nothing to do with the upcoming, at times stressful, holiday season. Anyway, retired members probably “get” the “inside jokes!”

- What is the biggest gripe of retirees? *There is not enough time to get everything done.*
- Among retirees, what is considered formal attire? *Tied shoes!*
- Why do retirees count pennies? *They are the only ones who have the time.*
- Why does a retiree often say he doesn't miss work but misses the people he used to work with? *He is too polite to tell the whole truth!*
- What do mathematicians call retirement? *Aftermath.*
- What do retirees call a long lunch? *Normal.*
- What do you call a person who is happy on Monday? *Retired.*
- “I can wait to retire so I can get up at 6 o'clock in the morning and go drive around really slow and make everybody late for work.” – *unknown*
- “Retirement is wonderful. It's doing nothing without worrying about getting caught at it.” – *Gene Perret, writer and producer known for The Carol Burnett Show.*



This month's “anti-COVID” cartoon was created by Upper St. Clair HS senior art student **Manjiri Palayekar**.

Santa jokes... Reader's Digest-approved for kids of all ages!

<https://www.rd.com/jokes/christmas-jokes/santa-jokes/>

- What do you call a kid who doesn't believe in Santa? *A rebel without a Claus.*
- Which of the reindeer has the worst manners? *RUDE-olph, of course!*
- Why do Dasher and Dancer love coffee? *Because they're Santa's star bucks!*
- What is Santa's favorite snack food? *Crisp Pringles!*
- What do you call Santa's helpers? *Subordinate Clauses.*
- What is Santa's primary language? *North Polish.*
- What is Santa's laundry detergent of choice? *Yule-Tide.*
- What do you call a bankrupt Santa? *Saint Nickel-less.*
- Why does St. Nick like the Temptations' version of *Silent Night*? *Because Santa Was a Rolling Stone.*
- Who is Santa's favorite singer? *Elf-is Presley*

**Reader's
Digest**



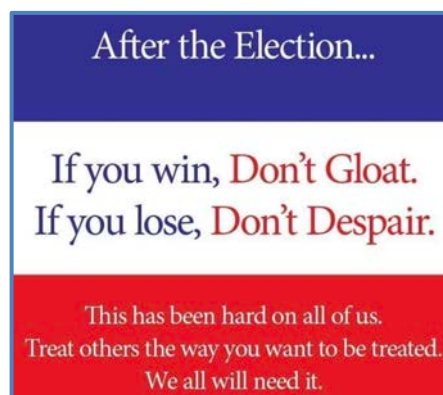
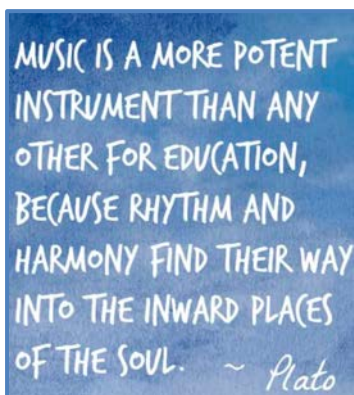
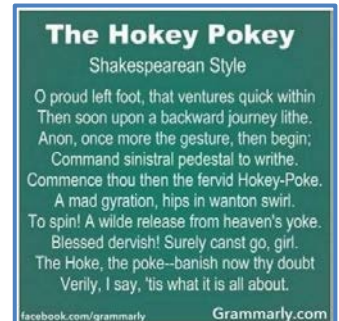
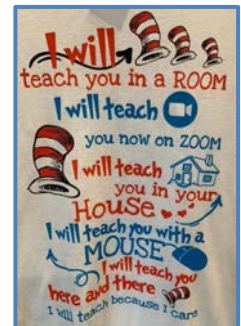
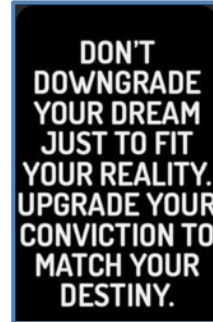
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A few more signs (and inspirations) of the times

shared by PMEA members and others on the Internet





This month's "Fox Finds" – Holiday tech gifts

We recognize the massive challenge of attempting to teach music classes, instrumental/voice lessons, or church/community ensemble sectionals online from home! This column has addressed a few high- and low-tech solutions, even simply offering digital resources to "reach-out" to your music colleagues and students... many in those "Brady-bunch-style" windows of Zoom, Google Meet, WebEx, or GoToMeeting.



If you plan to continue connecting with family, friends, or singers and instrumentalists, and cope with the problems of latency and poorly synchronized video and audio on these platforms, there are a few stocking stuffers you might ask Santa to bring you. Since my wife and I instituted an online academy for our community/youth orchestra, we have actually done a little "hands-on" and tried out a few of these hardware accessories. Although some are pricey, if you decide to jump into the virtual teaching environment, they are worth considering. (And, how else were you going to spend your pension check?)

First, to improve the sound input to your computer, you could purchase an external mic. Here are several excellent choices:

- My low-cost favorite for voice recording, podcasting, or leading virtual classes is the freestanding [Samson Q2U microphone \(~\\$59 kit\)](#). It has an on/off button. Just add a tripod and plug it into your computer's USB.
- For my wife who demonstrates a lot on her violin and viola, I recommend one of the Yeti Blue Mics, which provide broadcast-quality audio. She uses a [Blue Snowball \(\\$49\)](#). There's no mute button on the mic itself (accessible in the software), but a switch on the back does provide three different modes for recording. The reviews suggest this mic is particularly good for vocals. If you have more money to burn, consider several of the manufacturer's higher-end models: [Yeti Nano \(\\$69\)](#), [Yeti X \(\\$169\)](#), [Yeticaster \(\\$199\)](#), or [Yeti Pro \(\\$249\)](#).
- If you are planning to present remote workshop sessions without playing an instrument, you might want to look at the reasonably priced [Logitech H390 Headset with Noise Cancelling Mic \(as low as \\$27\)](#) - with "plug-in-and-go" compatibility and convenient inline volume and mute controls.



Next, what about external speakers? One of the teaching techniques we are using in our SHJO online academy is "soundtracks." I ask our musicians to "crank up the volume" on their speakers as we play a YouTube recording of the same arrangement in their folder. With their mics off, they can perform "together" (ah... "sort of!") But most internal speakers are not loud enough. (Their playing could drown out the accompaniment!)

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If you or your students are not able to use headphones or earplugs, here are a few recommended "add-ons!"

- I am perfectly happy with my old Brookstone Small Tower USB speaker wired to an iMac, but I cannot find the model 17059 anywhere on the Internet. The price range of Brookstone speakers varies greatly (\$29-\$299), and some are all-weather for portable use outdoors as well.
- For my wife, I bought the much higher-end [Bose SoundLink Revolve Portable Bluetooth Speaker with 360 Wireless Surround Sound \(\\$199\)](#). As you can imagine, this has outstanding sound. It sits in a recharging cradle. The only drawback? She found that one of her fluorescent lights near her desk somehow interfered with the Bluetooth signal, causing at times some irritating static noise during Zoom calls.
- My favorite "on-the-road" Bluetooth speaker is the [Bose SoundLink Mini \(\\$169\)](#). As usual, the Bose label jacks up the price a bit, but it has a remarkably big and rich tone quality, a wireless range of up to 30 feet, and battery life for up to 10 hours. For all of my pre-COVID-19 in-person conference sessions, it has been easy to tote around and pair via Bluetooth with my iPad Pro.



Another direction to go is to upgrade to earplugs. When replacing my iMac as an official "educator purchase," I was afforded a free set of wireless AirPods! I have not used them yet (they're still in the box). My plan for the future? Besides having "all mics off" in a virtual meeting, another rehearsal strategy is to allow "all mics on" but to have the participants turn off or remove their speakers, headphones, or earplugs and follow the cues of a conductor. This would allow me the chance to hear how everyone is doing... as the full ensemble or individually (turning on each mic separately). More to come in future editions of "Tech Talk" once I finish trying out this technique!



Finally, if you are frustrated with your household WIFI reception or having issues with intermittent connectivity during Zoom meetings, maybe it's time to "bite the bullet" and consider the purchase of a network router/extender from your cable provider. In our split-level house, we noticed several "dead zones" - walls and floors tend to shield WIFI signals. So, I purchased the [FiOS Network Extender WCB6200Q \(\\$120\)](#). We installed it to the cable box closest to my wife's desk, and as an additional benefit, connected her computer directly to the device via Ethernet cable. However, beware: *All network extenders are not created equal!* Although many small, inexpensive, outlet "plug-ins" may amplify WIFI signals, this may be done at the cost of speed! You could slow down your network as much as 50%. Get advice from your Comcast, Verizon, or other Internet provider!

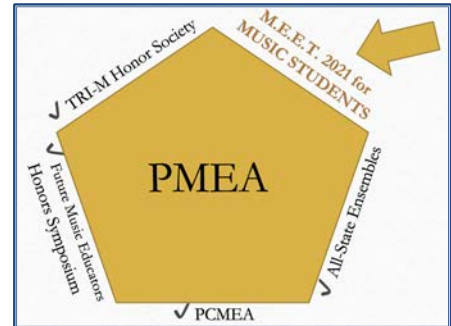




Two new and innovative PMEA projects on the horizon!

Virtual Mini-Conference for Students

Planning has begun on another first - the inaugural launch of a program geared to music students in grades 8-12 to be held in conjunction with the PMEA Spring Conference. Called **M.E.E.T.** - **m**usic-**e**xploration-**e**nrichment-**t**raining - this proposal is the result of a PMEA EXCOM initiative which envisions a one-day *online event* (April 17, 2021) that could be comprised of 3-5 session periods - perhaps a mix of breakouts and general sessions. Members of the PMEA TTRR Council have volunteered to assist, including Nathan Buonviri, Paul Fox, Jonathan Helmick, and Kathleen Melago. The goal would be to involve students outside of All-State and Future Music Educators Honors Symposium. (FMEHS is focused on high school seniors planning to major in music education.) **M.E.E.T.** could be more of a career development type program that introduces students to various fields and jobs in music. (Interested in joining the committee? Send an email to paulkfox.usc@gmail.com.) Still in the early discussion stages, these mini-sessions were "brainstormed" as possible offerings:



- Auditioning - tips and techniques
- College readiness
- Conducting
- Improvisation
- Instruments - upgrades and simple repairs
- Leadership
- Lifelong Learners/Performers/Community Ensemble Participation
- Meet an Artist
- Meet a Composer
- Meet a Conductor
- Modern Band
- Music Career Readiness
- Music Organization
- Preparing for a Music or Music Education Major (offered simultaneously with FMEHS?)
- Social Emotional Learning
- Small Ensemble
- Treating Music as a Part of Your Life

Beyond the Classroom (send submissions to <https://zfrmz.com/8ePARlxmcWvx45IMtOG9>)

We are looking for "masters and maestros" to present sessions for "virtual" or in-person music classrooms. Spearheaded by **PMEA State Immediate Past President Tina Bennett**, the plan would be to compile a digital library of introductory, one-hour, pro-bona video workshops of professionals in the Performing Arts arena - opera singers, Broadway dancers, Hollywood or television actors or producers, symphony musicians, theater craft technicians, make-up, lighting, costume, or scenery designers, popular artists, music professors, musicologists, lyricists, composers, etc. as our members plan supplemental remote and hybrid learning experiences for their students during 2020-2021.

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PMEA Retired Member Network eNEWS: December 3, 2020

by Paul K. Fox, PMEA Retired Members Coordinator

Pennsylvania Music Educators Association Retired Members

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How about submitting the names of anyone who enjoyed exposure (or found fame?) in the music or movie industry who were former graduates from your school or community?

In return, PMEA would provide the contact information of each volunteer contributor to promote the possibility of *reprise presentations* (with honorariums) to cover a wide range of topics, such as:

- Auditioning or interviewing preparation for college or employment
- Composition and arranging (specific genres or ensembles)
- Conducting
- Counseling for a career in a music field
- Digital editing
- Ear-training and sight-reading
- Fiddling
- Future music educators
- Jazz improvisation
- Master classes (specific area)
- Music history
- Music industry
- Music technology
- Performance practices of different music periods
- Practice tips
- Recording tools and methods
- Remediation of performance anxiety and stage fright
- Songwriting
- Theater tech
- Vocal techniques

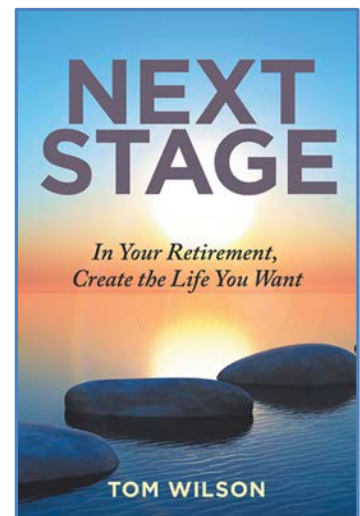
Book-of-the-month: **NEXT STAGE in Your Life – Create the Life You Want**

by Tom Wilson <https://www.mynextstage.org/>

Quite by accident, I bumped into another GREAT comprehensive manual on retirement:

Next Stage in Your Retirement - Create the Life You Want

written by Tom Wilson (Balboa Press, 2019). I think you will enjoy this new perspective on addressing the key questions of our major "life passage," or as said by international bestselling author Richard Leider of *The Power of Purpose, Repacking Your Bags, and Life Reimagined* (to be covered in a future eNEWS), "Reimagine the next stage of this voyage with the real possibility of growing *whole*, not *old*."



Here's a quote from the author's website:

This book summarizes major research studies about longevity, and provides valuable information on five key issues people face at this time of life. It shares meaningful stories about what people have faced and have done with their lives. These stories make the pathways come to life. This book provides checklists and worksheets for you to build your own plan for moving forward. So, if you're looking for a book that helps you find new directions for this time of your life, then this book was written for you. Remember what Henry David Thoreau said, "Life isn't about finding yourself; it's about creating yourself. So, live the life you've imagined."

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The most important goal of all of these reviews is to provide a bountiful resource for those transitioning through "living their dreams" during their post-employment years. (These are also suitable for anyone who is planning to retire over the next five years! Check out the archives on the PMEA retiree website of past "recommended readings!" https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bGkx4rqDE2m3JunmMailp2pThkSTWS1xWoiKI3_qWA/edit?usp=sharing)

Wilson's contents outlines a list of "inquiries" by chapters, a truly fresh approach:

1. The Dawn of a New Stage
2. 10 Stages Said to Find a Lifetime
3. Reinventing Adulthood
4. What Do You Want To Do with Your Time?
5. Will You Have Enough Money?
6. Who Do You Want to Live with?
7. How Do You Stay Healthy?
8. Who Are You Going to Be?
9. Developing Your Master Plan
10. Holding On and Letting Go



Intro to the book: <https://youtu.be/3YOaaq5terQ>

Tom Wilson

I was most inspired by the progressive analogies presented in Chapter 2 of "ten stages that define a lifetime" - unique to those previously cited by well-known gerontologists.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 1: Welcome to this World • Stage 2: Emerging Adolescence • Stage 3: Being a Teenager • Stage 4: Exploring Adulthood • Stage 5: Realizing Adulthood | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 6: Professional Adulthood • Stage 7: Pinnacle Adulthood • Stage 8: Reinventing Adulthood • Stage 9: Consolidating Adulthood • Stage 10: The Final Stage - Transcendence |
|--|---|

In addition, better than many books of this kind, there are clear, easy-to-understand explanations about "money," retirement asset tables, and sample financial forms such as projected income, expenses, budget, and revised financial projections (Chapter 5).

After this, I suggest jumping to Chapter 9 to complete the fill-in-the blank worksheets:

- Activity summary (things you are fully engaged and "in your zone")
- "Guideposts" and priorities (Chapter 4): achievement, leadership, helping others, relationships and connections with others, personal creativity and growth, making their world a better place, etc.
- Personal abilities and accomplishments
- "Next stage of your life" obligations, goals, expectations
- Expense budget, income sources, and putting the numbers together - a retiree financial plan
- Healthy habits
- Image of yourself and future lifestyle
- Final draft of the master plan

Very compelling work! I will leave you with the first quote in his book, attributed to **Mark Twain**: "Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So, throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

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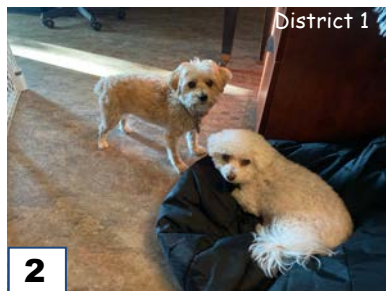




Match 'em – To whom do I belong? – Can you find their rightful owners?

from PMEA members or Scott Sheehan's Facebook posting of "Furry Friend Fridays!"

<https://www.facebook.com/scott.sheehan.73/posts/10223774413530676>



_____ Lynn Crytzer
_____ Paul and Donna Fox
_____ Courtney Geary
_____ Martha Miller

_____ Scott Pappal
_____ Scott Sheehan
_____ Rich and Louise Victor
(Answers on next page)

Thinking about getting a dog or cat over the holidays?

Many PMEA retirees have shared their awesome experiences of rescuing, adopting, or purchasing a new "furball" companion. Here are several blogposts to steer you in the right direction in making a suitable choice for your family, taking into account your interests, household setting, lifestyle, activity levels, etc. Is Fido calling *your* name?

- **Pets and Seniors:** <https://sixtyandme.com/pet-benefits-older-adults/>
- **Health Benefits:** <https://www.nextavenue.org/health-benefits-pets-older-adults/>
- **Pets and Purpose:** <https://seclusion101withannemarie.com/2019/09/13/pets-and-purpose/>
- **Good Furry Companions:** <https://www.greatseniorliving.com/articles/good-dogs-for-seniors>
- **Retired Member Coordinator's articles:** <https://paulfox.blog/category/pets/>

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On the 'Net – from the sublime to the ridiculous

These are just in case you want a little more entertainment... everything from possible seasonal gift purchases (additional ideas to accompany this issue's "Tech Talk" column) to unique retiree stories in the news:

- **Good Educational Websites for Music**
<https://www.educatorstechnology.com/2018/03/10-good-educational-websites-for-music.html>
- **10 Must Have Gadgets for Teachers in the Classroom (2019)**
<https://www.getcleartouch.com/10-must-have-tech-gadgets-for-teachers-in-the-classroom-for-2019/>
- **20 Technology Gadgets for Teachers (2020)**
<https://www.maneuveringthemiddle.com/20-technology-gadgets-for-teachers/>
- **What Does Retirement Look Like in a Pandemic?**
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/07/business/retirement/pandemic-life-seniors.html>
- **Retirement After the COVID-19 Pandemic**
<https://www.retireguide.com/guides/covid-19-retirement/>
- **Classical Music Personality Quiz... and other tests from ClassicFM**
<https://www.classicfm.com/lifestyle/quizzes/musical-introvert-or-extrovert/>
- **Retired Music Teacher Creates Whimsical Animal Children's Book**
<https://www.severnaparkvoice.com/stories/retired-music-teacher-and-entertainer-creates-a-whimsical-animal-book-for-children,30438>

Answers to "Match 'em" on page 8
3 Lynn Crzytzer
2 Paul & Donna Fox
1 Scott Pappal
5 Rich & Louise Victor
4 Courtney Gearry
7 Martha Miller

Advocacy corner... from our political pundits

To stay "in the loop," satisfy your curiosity, and to make informed future decisions in voting or expressing your "voice," we recommend you attend one of the many *free* webinars (PMEA Cares, PMEA Open Forum, etc.) organized by our "webinar queen" **Teri Myers**, Executive Director **Abi Young**, and Director of Education and Events **Marissa LaBant**. Once you view the "Election Recap" recording (November 19, 2020) at <https://www.pmea.net/webinars/>, hosted by **Mark Despokatis** with guest speakers **Mary Luehrsen** from NAMM and **Ron Cowell** from Pennsylvania's Education Policy and Leadership Center, check out these links:

- **2020 NEA Policy Playbook for Congress and the Biden/Harris Administration** <https://www.nea.org/resource-library/2020-nea-policy-playbook-congress-and-biden-harris-administration>
- **Fund Our Schools PA** <https://www.fundourschoolspa.org>
- **NAMM Believe-in-Music Week** <https://attend.believeinmusic.tv>
- **NAMM Fall Webinars** <https://www.nammfoundation.org/projects/believe-music-fall-webinar-series>



Moving up?

Kudos to Advocacy Chair **Mark Despokatis** for accepting the newly created full-time staff position of PMEA Director of Public & Government Affairs to start on January 1, 2021.
(Talk about the perfect person for this job!)

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Celebrating the holidays during a pandemic

You have heard the COVID-19 directives - be safe, wear a mask, avoid crowds, wash your hands, stay socially distanced, etc. These sites have even more information:

- <https://www.ucsf.edu/news/2020/11/419051/holiday-gatherings-during-covid-19-what-doctors-say-about-traveling-and-family>
- <https://www.webmd.com/lung/news/20201110/can-you-safely-host-holiday-events-during-covid>
- <https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/HealthU/2020/10/26/how-to-more-safely-celebrate-the-holidays-this-year/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html>

CODA: Heard through the grapevine...

Share your own "finds" with your colleagues: paulkfox.usc@gmail.com

- Did you see Adrienne Davis Kelly's television commercial for **Highmark?** "It's a little side hobby during retirement... Trying to reinvent myself."
- The connection between Alex Trebek (RIP) and the **Greenville Symphony**
https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=410979665591989&story_fbid=3825956674094254

Answer: Greenville, Pennsylvania on November 5, 1994

Question: Where did Alex Trebek conduct his first symphony orchestra?

- Ideas to host virtual holiday parties for family members over Zoom
<https://museumhack.com/virtual-christmas-party/> and
<https://www.pennlive.com/life/2020/11/zoom-thanksgiving-the-7-best-games-to-play-on-that-holiday-family-call.html>



Adrienne Kelly



Alex Trebek

<https://carolyncholland.wordpress.com/>



- Carnegie-Mellon University presented a **2020 Alumni Service Award** to Paul Gerlach

<https://www.cmu.edu/engage/about-us/news/alumni/alumni-awards2020.html>

- Anyone interested in trying out, reviewing, or proofreading a website and Act 48 coursework on **teacher ethics**, please reply ASAP to paulkfox.usc@gmail.com.

- Just for laughs... <https://fb.watch/1QZiSs7gc8/> and <https://youtu.be/VnT7pT6zCcA>



Paul Gerlach

**Best Wishes for a
Safe,
Prosperous, and
Festive
New Year!**

Happy Trails, Retired Members! PKF

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